

F 373

.D73

[Separate No. 154]

The Spanish Domination of Upper Louisiana

By Walter B. Douglas

[From the Proceedings of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin for
1913, pages 74-90]

Madison
Published for the Society

1914

The Spanish Domination of Upper Louisiana¹

By Walter B. Douglas of St. Louis²

Upper Louisiana, or, as it was known during nearly the whole period of the Spanish domination, the western part of the Illinois, was a country indefinite in its boundaries. It was limited by the Mississippi on the east; on the south by an undetermined line north of and near the Arkansas River; on the north and west it merged into the unknown. It was a country rich beyond anything the world had ever dreamed of, yet the leader of the first white men who traversed it is said to have died of disappointment at not finding in it the wealth for which he sought.

The first white men who entered the country were Spaniards. Saturday, June 18, 1541, Hernando de Soto with his little

¹ No Spanish account of this period has been found. The principal authorities for the statements in this paper are the Archives and Church Registers at St. Louis; Louis Houck, *History of Missouri* (Chicago, 1908), and *Spanish Régime in Missouri* (Chicago, 1909); and Marc de Villiers du Terrage, *Les Dernières Années de La Louisiane Française* (Paris, 1903); all books of the greatest value. In addition to the French and Spanish archives, the Missouri Historical Society has in the Chouteau, Vallé, and Poepping collections, and in the "Papers from Spain", a vast amount of material, all of which has been examined and utilized.—W. B. D.

² This paper was prepared by Judge Douglas, vice-president of the Missouri Historical Society, at the request of the late Dr. R. G. Thwaites, superintendent of the Wisconsin State Historical Society, for presentation at the annual meeting, Oct. 23, 1913. Because of the death of Doctor Thwaites the preceding day no public meeting was held. Judge Douglas has, however, kindly furnished for publication the paper he had prepared for that occasion.—Ed.

Spanish Rule in Upper Louisiana

army of soldiers crossed the Mississippi, near where the city of Memphis now stands. Later in the same year Francisco Vasquez de Coronado, who had come up from Mexico, traversed the plains of Kansas probably to the Platte or the Missouri. Both of these expeditions were seeking for plunder, and both were failures. The savage cruelty shown by De Soto and his men towards the Indians was never exceeded, perhaps never equaled, on the part of the Indians towards the whites. And while the Indians had the excuse that they were fighting for their homes and hunting grounds, the Spanish could allege none whatsoever.

After the retirement of these expeditions, the country remained unharassed by Europeans for nearly a century and a half. Then came in 1673 Joliet and Marquette, trader and missionary. They were quickly followed by explorers and *coureurs de bois*, and before the seventeenth century had closed there was at least one French village on the east side of the Mississippi near St. Louis, quickly followed by several others.

The news of these French settlements in Upper Louisiana reached the Spanish in Mexico, who in 1720 sent an expedition under the command of Don Pedro Villazur to drive them out. This expedition reached the Missouri where it was exterminated by the Indians.³ A few years ago an ancient Spanish battle-ax which may be a relic of Villazur's party was found in the neighborhood of Kansas City. This was the last hostile incursion into Upper Louisiana on the part of Spain. Forty-two years later she received the country as a gift.

Louis XV of France, November 3, 1762, "from the pure impulse of his generous heart," in the words of the treaty, ceded to his dearly beloved cousin, the King of Spain, all the country known under the name of Louisiana.⁴ February 10, of the next year, by the Treaty of Paris, he conveyed all of the country east of the Mississippi, excepting the island upon which New

³ See Father Charlevoix's account of this expedition, translated for *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, xvi, pp. 413, 414.—Ed.

⁴ "This cession was not an act of generosity, but was a small compensation for the sacrifices imposed upon Spain by the selfish friendship of France."—Jerónimo Becker, in *La Espana Moderna*, May 1, 1893.—W. B. D.

Wisconsin Historical Society

Orleans stands, to Great Britain. Both nations were slow to take possession of their new dominions, and meanwhile the French continued to govern the country. October 10, 1765, St. Ange, the French governor at Fort Chartres, delivered possession of the eastern part of the Illinois to a detachment of British soldiers commanded by Capt. Thomas Stirling, and moved the seat of government across the river to the new post of St. Louis.⁵ In 1767, a detachment of Spanish soldiers was sent up the river from New Orleans to build two forts at the mouth of the Missouri, their commandant having instructions not to interfere with the existing French government.⁶

It was not until May 20, 1770, that Don Pedro Piernas who had been appointed by General Alexandro O'Reilly, of infamous memory, lieutenant-governor "of the village of St. Louis, Ste. Genevieve, and all the districts of the Misuri River and the districts of Ylinneses belonging to His Majesty", reached St. Louis, and took over the government of the country from St. Ange, the French commandant in charge. O'Reilly gave to Governor Piernas a paper of instructions to be strictly followed by him in his new government. "There are", he said, "three primary objects to be looked after * * *. These are that the dominion and government of His Majesty be loved and respected; justice administered promptly, impartially, and according to the laws; and that commerce be protected and increased as much as possible." He also directed the lieutenant-governor to preserve so far as possible the greatest harmony with the English; to cause the Indians to know the greatness, clemency, and generosity of the King, and to see to it that they received

⁵ Among the myths which have gathered about the early history of St. Louis is one to the effect that the authority exercised by St. Ange over the territory west of the Mississippi was conferred upon him by the people of St. Louis. This, though utterly without foundation in fact or reason, has been generally accepted by writers on the history of the country.—W. B. D.

⁶ The place where these forts were erected was called "the Misuri," and later "the District of the Misuri," to distinguish it from the District of the Ylinneses (Illinois), in which St. Louis was situated. This was the first use of the word Missouri as a territorial designation. For accounts of these forts, see "The Beginning of Spanish Missouri" and "The Spanish Forts at the Mouth of the Missouri River", in *Missouri Historical Collections*, iii, pp. 145, 269.—W. B. D.

Spanish Rule in Upper Louisiana

good treatment and fair dealing; to exercise as an invariable principle the greatest economy in regard to the treasury; furthermore, he was not to permit any person to establish his residence in the country without having permission therefor in writing from the governor-general of the province, nor to allow any English merchants or traders to enter the country, or the vassals of His Majesty to have any communication with them.⁷

When Piernas came to Upper Louisiana there were in the district but two villages, St. Louis and Ste. Genevieve. Ste. Genevieve was the older town, having existed since the early part of the century. St. Louis had been founded in 1764 by Pierre Laclède, member of a trading company which had a grant from the French governor at New Orleans of a monopoly of trade on the upper rivers—the Missouri and the Mississippi. The times proved fortunate for the growth of the new post. The French inhabitants on the east side of the river, inspired by dislike of the heretical English, abandoned the country in great numbers. Some went down the river to New Orleans; many of the wealthier farmers moved with their slaves across the Mississippi to Ste. Genevieve; the officials, the traders, the craftsmen, and many others went to St. Louis.

Governor Piernas had a census made in 1772 which showed that St. Louis had a population of 399 whites and 198 slaves; while at Ste. Genevieve were 404 whites and 287 slaves—making about thirteen hundred people in the country. A year later St. Louis had 444 whites and 193 slaves; and Ste. Genevieve 400 whites and 276 slaves, an increase of twenty-five people in all.

These little communities had no neighbors except the remains of the Franco-British villages across the river. It was a three-months' voyage up the river from New Orleans, and about as long a journey from Canada. It may illustrate the isolation of these communities, to recall John Bradbury's exclamation of surprise nearly fifty years later at the ease with which he caught his horse, turned out to graze on the edge of the village

⁷ A translation of these instructions may be found in Houck, *Spanish Régime*, i, pp. 76-81.—Ed.

Wisconsin Historical Society

of St. Louis, considering the fact, he says, that there was not a fence to obstruct his passage to the Pacific Ocean.

The people who had made their homes in this western wilderness were for the most part either Canadians or natives of the Illinois. Some of the officers were of French birth, and a few other inhabitants had come direct from France. There was practically no Spanish immigration. Some of the Spanish officers and soldiers married French women and became identified with the people.

The population included all social classes. The majority were descendants of the peasant class in France, some were of the Canadian *noblesse*, and some could trace their lineage through a line of noble ancestors back to the time of the Crusades. Little emphasis, however, was laid upon social distinctions. No landed class could arise because there was land enough for all.⁸ There was no great wealth and no poverty. I visited,

⁸ In the granting of lands the French practice was less liberal than that of the Spanish. The French seemed to be more under the influence of European ideas and gave little consideration to the difference between the situation of settlers in a new country and that of people at home in France; though it may be that their practice was controlled by the necessity of holding the people together for common defense. The French grants were of village lots and of common field lots, the latter usually one or two arpents in front by forty in depth. The Spanish grants were not limited to narrow strips in the French manner, but were given in such shape as the petitioner desired and the situation allowed. The grants ranged in quantity from a few arpents to five hundred thousand, which latter amount was the largest grant made. Ordinarily the grants were made for the use of the grantee, and he was given as much as his means allowed him to put in cultivation. The larger grants were made for services rendered. No land was sold in Upper Louisiana by either France or Spain. The mere concession by the lieutenant-governor was sufficient to confer the right to the quantity of land designated, and all that was necessary to obtain title was to fix the grant upon a definite location and have its boundaries determined by a survey. When the Americans took over the country they failed to recognize the principles which had theretofore controlled, with the result that many of the inhabitants were unjustly deprived of their property. When, under the decisions of the United States Supreme Court, the rights of the grantees were finally recognized, a large part of the land had passed into the hands of American speculators. See "Report of Commissioners for the Adjustment of Land Titles in Missouri," in 24 Cong., 1 sess., *House Docs.*, no. 59.—W. B. D.

Spanish Rule in Upper Louisiana

years ago, at the house of a Creole family which I like to think was typical of the old times. Every material thing about the house showed the narrowness of the family income. But not so the family itself. The dignity and grace of *la grande dame* was as natural to the mother as the air she breathed, and the daughters were all that might be expected from such a mother. Among such people there was no poverty of spirit.

The Louisiana French had no passion for wealth. They were talkative and gay, at times energetic and at times idle. When there was work to be done they showed an endurance which was surprising. They were fearless but not pugnacious; they fought when it was necessary, but did not love fighting for its own sake. They were hospitable to the last extreme, kindly to each other and to their slaves. The legal records of the Spanish régime show very few cases on the criminal docket. There is an occasional murder case, but I have found none for larceny. They sinned more with the tongue than otherwise, for the records show many prosecutions for slander, in which the offender, if found guilty, was sentenced to take his place at the church door when the people were coming out from mass and make public apology.

One illustration of the honesty of the time is shown by the following testamentary provision. Captain De Volsey, a man, by the way, whose habit of drink is remembered against him, recited in his will that he had sold to Mr. Sarpy an annuity, the payment of which was charged upon some church property in France; that he feared that owing to the troubles in France this annuity might not be as productive as he had represented it to be, and that should such a thing happen, his executor was to protect Mr. Sarpy against any loss. De Volsey's only mention of his wife in his will was a bequest to her of five pairs of his breeches.

Many of the Canadians among the population were fairly educated, but their children and the natives of the country had no opportunity for schooling. Many descendants of noble and distinguished families could neither read nor write; frequently when a signature is found affixed to a paper, its laborious character shows that knowledge of penmanship went no further than the writing of the name. In time, however, schools

Wisconsin Historical Society

were established. Master Jean Baptiste Truteau from Canada set up a school in St. Louis which he continued intermittently long after the American occupation. When funds were low or the inclination strong he went off on a trading expedition among the Indians. An interesting journal of his, written about 1795, gives the earliest account of some of the nations on the upper Missouri.⁹ A pupil of his writing of the school says, "The only books used in this institution were the catechism and the prayer book. The scholars were taught their letters, their doctrine, their devotions, from these two, and at one and the same time learned to read and pray." He describes the school master himself in these words: "He certainly was a strict and even a harsh disciplinarian, and many are the stories told of the strange modes of punishment to which his pupils of either sex were subjected. One of his mildest, was fastening a large placard on the back of the youthful offender, inscribed with the nature of the offense. The pupil then paraded the main streets of the village, followed at a distance by two of his fellow pupils, who upon their return to the school reported that the offender had duly made the prescribed march."¹⁰

There was in early days another teacher, Madame Maria Josepha Rigauche. Like Truteau, she had other occupations, and owned boats that traded between St. Louis and New Orleans. No pupil has left us an account of her teaching, but this story which is told about her may stimulate our imagination as to her methods of discipline. "There was a female, who became afterwards the school mistress of the village, who when the savages made the attack [on St. Louis, May 26, 1780,] put on a coat, buttoning it well up to her chin, armed with a pistol in one hand and with a knife in the other, took her station at one of the gates, encouraged the men to make a valiant defense, and fearlessly exposed her person to the fire of the savages."¹¹

Some of the people sent their children to Canada and to New Orleans to be educated, and a few were sent to France. It is not possible to tell how general the reading habit was among

⁹ For Truteau's Journal see *American Historical Review*, xix, pp. 299-323, and *Missouri Hist. Colls.*, iv, pp. 9-48.—W. B. D.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 137.—Ed.

¹¹ Richard Edwards, *Great West* (St. Louis, 1860), p. 589.—W. B. D.

Spanish Rule in Upper Louisiana

the educated people, but in the inventory of the estate of Col. Auguste Chouteau there is a list of his library which was an extensive one, well chosen, and the titles of the books would, I am sure, arouse the desires of booklovers of the present day.

There was but one career open to the active and ambitious young men of the time, and that was trade with the Indians. For the less ambitious farming and mining offered a competence; quantities of wheat and corn were raised, and much of it was shipped down the river to a profitable market. The lead mines were remunerative even with the crude methods used for reducing the ore. But what appealed to the imagination was the freedom and adventure of the Indian trade with its substantial rewards. Each autumn the young and middle-aged men departed to various parts of the Indian country, leaving the defense of the villages during the winter to their elders and the less enterprising. When a new tribe was found the discoverer had a claim to a monopoly of its trade. Notwithstanding O'Reilly's instruction that, "for no reason at all shall the governor suffer or authorize any monopoly, or concede any exclusive rights," Baron Carondelet, governor at New Orleans, on the recommendation of Lieutenant-Governor Perez granted to Jean Munier of St. Louis the exclusive trade with the Ponea tribe because he had discovered that nation.

The St. Louis traders were the pathfinders through the whole of the country, penetrating to the most distant recesses of the Rocky Mountains. Many of them took unto themselves wives from among the Indians; some of them remained with their new allies, some brought their wives and children back to the village from which they started. The church registers contain many entries of the baptism of mixed-blood children who had been brought in for that purpose. One of the most notable records is that of the family of Jean Marie Cardinal. May 30, 1776, his seven daughters and one son were baptized at the church in St. Louis; next the mother was baptized; then Cardinal and the mother were married.¹² The mother was a black Pawnee by name Careche-Caranche, but the priest gave her the

¹² Compare similar instances in the Mackinac "Register," published in *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, xviii, xix.—ED.

Wisconsin Historical Society

new name of Marianne. She and Cardinal had been married in the Indian country according to the usage of her nation, but that meant nothing to the Church, and a new marriage was required. The daughters all married Frenchmen, and many substantial citizens of Missouri trace their descent from this couple. The father was killed by the Indians in the attack on St. Louis in 1780, and an avenue in that city now bears his name.

The French had none of the aversion for the Indians which was shown by people of English blood. They recognized their common humanity, and their association with them was productive of good to both races. One reason for this was that the French Creole was not given to thinking overmuch about himself. He was gay and happy and ready to make the most of the world about him. Captain Stoddard says of them that "of all the people on the globe the French in Louisiana appear to be the happiest".¹³

It was over this people that the rule of Spain extended for thirty-four years. The Spanish domination began at a time when the memory of events in Lower Louisiana was fresh in the minds of all. Sympathy with the aspirations of the revolutionists at New Orleans, pride in their assertion of their nationality as against the Spaniards, and horror at the butchery of the revolutionary leaders by O'Reilly, must have found strong lodgment in their hearts. Yet they suppressed their feelings and acquiesced in the change of government with no apparent dissatisfaction. In its treatment of the people the Spanish government showed great wisdom. It placed few burdens upon them and left them in most respects a free people. No property tax was imposed, and the small revenue which was raised was produced from licenses, inheritance taxes, and a tariff on both imports and exports. In 1799, the treasury of the King of Spain being depleted by the cost of war, it was intimated to the inhabitants of Upper Louisiana that voluntary patriotic donations would be acceptable from the well-to-do people of the province, and the response was generous.

While the governor was both civil and military commandant,

¹³ Amos Stoddard, *Sketches of Louisiana* (Philadelphia, 1812), p. 310.—Ed.

Spanish Rule in Upper Louisiana

the government was in the nature of a military occupation. Yet, although the governor's force was designated as "the army", it seldom exceeded two hundred men in the whole country. The governor's civil powers were judicial rather than executive. There were no public works except the fortifications of the villages; no roads were built, no schools established, and the only public buildings of which there is record were the barracks and the calaboose. All citizens between the ages of fifteen and fifty were enrolled in the militia. They were instructed in tactics by Spanish officers, and were required to parade every Sunday when the weather permitted; but the militia officers and men were all French and the service was by no means arduous. While the system of law administered by the governor was nominally Spanish, it was in fact a crude system based upon the *Coutume de Paris*, which was the French common law of the country. The proceedings were summary. The injured party addressed a petition to the governor setting forth the particulars of his complaint written in the French language; the governor indorsed upon it in Spanish a command that the party complained of be notified to answer the complaint; the notification was made by an officer who was always designated by the French title of *hussier*; he made his return of service in his own language, according as he happened to be a Frenchman or a Spaniard. When the answer was in, the governor himself heard the testimony and decided the case, or, if he saw fit, caused each party to choose an arbitrator, and the two so chosen selected a third. These arbitrators acted as judges in the cause, there being no instance where the governor failed to confirm their decision. Criminal cases were decided by the governor. A favorite method of disposing of unruly persons was banishment from the country. In cases of importance there was an appeal to the *cabildo* at New Orleans, and a further appeal was allowed to the authorities at Havana, but appeals were infrequent. Decisions were speedy and seemingly impartial, and justice seems to have been the rule. During the whole of the Spanish domination there was not a practising lawyer in the country.

In dealing with the Indians the government adopted a policy exactly the opposite to that followed by the Spanish explorers. It seems to have been the purpose to follow French methods.

Wisconsin Historical Society

In a letter in 1781, from Gov. Francisco Cruzat to the Sauk and Fox Indians the governor says, "your fathers, the French and the Spanish, have always been but one. * * * Know then, when you shake hands with the Spanish, you also shake hands with the French".¹⁴ But the Spanish methods were much less vigorous and less effective than the French. The Osage Indians at one time descended upon Ste. Genevieve and carried away every horse in the village. Instead of being followed and punished, and the property retaken, they were notified that unless they returned the stolen animals there should be no more trade between them and the whites.

The Indians frequently visited the villages and terrorized the whites without punishment. Captain Stoddard tells this story:¹⁵

One instance, among many others, may be adduced to explain the character of the Missouri Indians. While a kind of predatory war raged in 1794, between one of their tribes and the whites, a peace was concluded in a singular manner: A war chief, with a party of his nation, boldly entered St. Louis, and demanded an interview with the lieutenant-governor, to whom he said, "We have come to offer you peace; we have been at war with you many moons, and what have we done? Nothing. Our Warriors have tried every means to meet your's in battle, but you will not, you dare not fight us; you are a parcel of old women. What can be done with such a people but to make peace, since you will not fight? I come, therefore, to offer you peace, and to bury the hatchet; to brighten the chain, and again to open the way between us." The Spanish government was obliged to bear this insult with patience, and to grant the desired peace.

At another time a St. Louis Creole was shot down and killed at the edge of the village by a party of Indians. The governor being temporarily absent, the French captain of militia called together a party of his men, followed the marauders and took a bloody vengeance. The governor removed him from office and sent him to New Orleans for punishment. He had, it is said, to make a voyage to Spain in order to obtain pardon for his hasty and unauthorized action.

Although the people were continually harassed and exposed to loss of life and property at the hands of the Indians, when

¹⁴ *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, III, p. 505.—W. B. D.

¹⁵ Stoddard, *Louisiana*, p. 263.—Ed.

Spanish Rule in Upper Louisiana

the latter learned that their great father in Spain was in need, and had asked for donations, one tribe came in and offered the proceeds of their hunting to swell the fund.

The Indians were not the only marauders. Pirates infested the Mississippi River, the only highway to the outside world, pillaged the traders, and even made captive the wife and child of Governor Cruzat.¹⁶ The suppression of piracy was accomplished by the combined action of the traders without help from the government.

The principle of economy, insisted upon by O'Reilly in his instructions to Piernas, was a controlling one during the whole period of the Spanish régime, and is one explanation of the inaction of the authorities. The governor was responsible for all expenditure. His accounts were subjected to the most critical scrutiny by the auditor's office at New Orleans, and every item about which the slightest doubt existed was disallowed and charged against the governor's salary, which seldom exceeded one hundred and forty dollars a month, and was often much less. A German traveler named Schultz who visited Upper Louisiana tells a story current in the country, which has been often repeated and accepted as true. He says that when the commandant at Ste. Genevieve presented his account for the building of the fort at that village to the governor, he was coldly received and his account merely glanced at without any word of approval. The commandant consulted a friend of the governor as to the reason why he should be subjected to such treatment. The friend asked to be shown the account, and seeing that it was for 412 pesos, he smilingly added a cipher to the amount making it 4,120 pesos and told the commandant to see what the governor would say to that. The commandant presented the account again and received the same treatment as at first. Returning to the governor's friend with the story of his ill success, the friend took a pen and added still another cipher making 41,200 pesos. This time the commandant was received with favor, his account was approved, and in time he received a little more than the amount first demanded.¹⁷

¹⁶ See an interesting account of Madame Cruzat's capture and imprisonment in Houck, *Spanish Régime*, i, pp. 211-234.—W. B. D.

¹⁷ Christian Schultz junior, *Travels* (New York, 1810), i, pp. 68, 69.—Ed.

Wisconsin Historical Society

The record of the Ste. Genevieve fort has not been found, but the barracks at St. Louis were damaged by a wind storm at about the same time, and we have a full account of the procedure adopted in that case. First, a report was made to the comptroller of accounts of the fact that the damage had occurred, with a request that the necessary expenditure for repairs might be authorized. Consent to this having been given, a carpenter and two citizens of high standing were called in to examine and report on the condition of the building, which report was made in great detail. Then bids were taken for the doing of the work. The report and the bids were sent to New Orleans for approval, and when approved the work was done. Then a specific account of the work done and the materials used was sent to the auditor, who raised many objections, one of which was that the charge for four pounds of nails was excessive.

Nearly all American writers say that the Spanish officials were systematic depredators upon the Royal Treasury, but no authority has been found for such statements. Everything known of the officials in Upper Louisiana supports the belief that they were honest men. As we have seen the taxation was very light and the provincial government had very little money at its disposal. Most of what it did have was specifically appropriated. The salaries of the officers of the troops and of the priests were paid by the King; the priests received from \$365 to \$400 a year in addition, generally, to one or two slaves or hired servants. They received from the people fees for baptisms, marriages, and burials, and the people generally built and maintained the churches and the priest's house.

In the early years of the Spanish régime no settlers were admitted to the country who did not swear allegiance to both the King and the Catholic Church. Later, when the pressure of Americans became too strong to be resisted, Protestants were admitted, but their religion was not tolerated, and the requirement was that their children must receive Catholic baptism. Amusing stories are told in this connection of one of the governors.

An American settler, Abraham Musick, between whom and the governor a friendship had grown up, applied for liberty to

Spanish Rule in Upper Louisiana

hold Baptist meetings at his house. The widow of Mr. Musick reported the interview, years afterwards, to the Rev. John M. Peck in this way:

"My friend, John Clark, is in the country on a visit to his friends," said Mr. Musick. "He is a good man, peaceably disposed, and will behave as a good citizen should. The American people desire to hear him preach at my house occasionally. Will the commandant please give permission, that we may not be molested? We will hold our meetings quietly, make no disturbance, and say nothing against the King of Spain nor the Catholic religion." The governor was inclined to favor the American settlers, but he was officially obliged to reject all such petitions, so replied, with seeming determination: "No, Monsieur Musick. I can not permit no such ting; 'tis against de law; you must all be *bon Catholique* in dis contree. Very sorry, Mons. Musick, I cannot oblige you, but I must follow de '*Regulation*.'"

Discouraged at this decision, in a tone so magisterial, Mr. Musick regarded any further effort hopeless, and arose to depart from the office, when, with a gracious countenance, the governor said: "Sit down, Mons. Musick; please sit down; I soon get dis paper fix for dese *gentleman* who wait; and den we talk. You must eat my dinner, and drink a glass of *bon vin*. You and I good friend, though I cannot let you make a church house." After dispatching the business on hand, the governor insisted on the company of Mr. Musick to dinner. While discoursing with volubility in his imperfect English, the wily commandant adverted to the petition so unceremoniously rejected in the office.

"You understand me, Monsieur Musick, I presume. You must not put—what do you call him—*un clocher*, on your house and call it a church; dat is all wrong, you must make no bell ring. And now hear me, Mons. Musick, you must let no man baptize your *enfant* but de parish priest. But if your friend come to see you, your neighbor come there, you *conversez*; you say prayer; you read Bible; you sing song—dat is all right—you all *bon Catholique*."

While this disposition of a question perplexing to the governor accommodated the American settlers, it gave no legal countenance to the visits of a preacher from another nation and a different religion, but the people came out to the meetings with less fear of the prison. Mr. Clark continued his visits nearly every month, which did not escape the notice of the governor. The latter soon learned the period of his visits, and never failed, some two or three days before his return to Illinois, to send a threatening message into the country to this effect, "If Mons. Clark did not leave the Spanish country in three days, he would be put in the *calabozo*." So regularly came this message that it

Wisconsin Historical Society

became a standing jest with his friends to inquire, "Well, Brother Clark, when do you go to the *calabozo*?" "In three days", would be the reply, which all understood to mean crossing the river to the American side.

The years of the Spanish régime, which were so uneventful within the country, were years teeming with eventfulness without. The American colonists rebelled against the rule of the mother country, and by a successful war achieved their independence. The Revolution reached to the border of Upper Louisiana when George Rogers Clark made conquest of the villages across the river. There were, however, two events in which the Spanish authorities in Upper Louisiana became involved with the outside world. In 1780, a detachment of British and Indians from Mackinac made an attack upon St. Louis, but the attack seems to have been half-hearted and was beaten off without great loss on either side. The King sent his thanks and a promotion in military rank to the governor, De Leyba, for his vigorous defense; but the governor was dead by the time the King's letter was written.¹⁸ The next year a party of St. Louis militia aided by some Illinois Creoles and friendly Indians marched through the January snows across what is now Illinois and captured the post of St. Joseph in Michigan. They carried the British flag of the post back to Governor Cruzat, and later the Spanish claimed the Illinois country by right of conquest, but the claim came to nothing.¹⁹

Later when American immigrants crossed the Alleghanies, swarmed into Tennessee, Kentucky, and Ohio, and penetrated even into "the Illinois", the Spanish were filled with dread. They endeavored to protect their country against the advance of the Americans by inducing Catholic immigration from whatsoever nationality it might come. In this, however, they met with little success. Then came the Revolution in France, which had two effects upon Louisiana. It brought to it many *émigrés*, people of birth and education who sought safety in the New World. These people took rank among the best in the province, and many families influential in Missouri at the present time

¹⁸ Houck, *Spanish Régime*, i, pp. 167-174.—Ed.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 207; *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, xviii, pp. 430-432; *Missouri Historical Review*, ii, pp. 195-210; v, pp. 214-228.—Ed.

Spanish Rule in Upper Louisiana

are descended from them. Though the Creoles had no reason to love the government of France which had abandoned them, they still considered themselves Frenchmen and loved the country of their ancestors. They were divided in their sympathies; most of them adhered to the old régime, but some, favoring the principles of the Revolution, formed a society which they called the *sans culottes*. On the revolutionary New Year's day, September 22, 1796, the latter paraded the streets of St. Louis, and sang the songs of the Revolution before the houses of the principal citizens and at the priest's door. The governor-general at New Orleans was greatly scandalized by this performance, and gave orders to have the ringleaders arrested and sent down for punishment, but Gov. Zenon Trudeau, himself a Creole, allowed the offenders to hide until the storm was over.²⁰

The retrocession of the country to France soon followed—then the sale in April, 1803, by Napoleon to the United States. In the fall of that year, Captains Lewis and Clark, who had been sent by President Jefferson to explore the new purchase, applied to Governor DeLassus for permission to make their camp in the country so that they might be ready to start up the Missouri River in the spring. Governor DeLassus would not consider the admission of foreign soldiers into His Majesty's dominions, and Lewis and Clark had to make their camp on the east side of the Mississippi.²¹

The surrender of possession of Lower Louisiana took place at New Orleans in December, 1803. The French commissioners declined to make the long voyage to St. Louis in order to deliver the possession of Upper Louisiana. The French in that country were Spanish subjects and for that reason could not act for France. So authority was given to Capt. Amos Stoddard of the United States army to represent the French Republic and to receive on behalf of France the possession of the country from Spain. March 9, 1804, this transfer was made.²²

Not many years ago in the trial of a case at St. Louis, a mulatto woman testified to her recollections of the event. She

²⁰ See "letter of instructions," Carondelet to Howard, 1796, *Missouri Hist. Colls.*, iii, pp. 71, 75.—W. B. D.

²¹ See R. G. Thwaites (ed.), *Original Journals of Lewis and Clark Expedition* (New York, 1904-05), i, p. xxxi; vii, p. 231.—Ed.

²² *Ibid.*, i, p. 4; Stoddard, *Louisiana*, preface; Houck, *History of Missouri*, ii, pp. 255-263.—Ed.

Wisconsin Historical Society

said the English soldiers, as she called them, came across the river and climbed the bank to the Government House; the Spanish soldiers, with Governor DeLassus, wearing his gold uniform, at their head marched down from the fort on the hill; then Governor DeLassus gave to the English captain a big key and the flag was taken down from the flag pole, the people all standing about crying. When asked if she cried, the witness answered that she did cry, for she thought that she had lost her King. There is a tradition that when the Spanish flag was taken down and the tricolored French flag raised in its place, Captain Stoddard was approached by some of the Creoles with the petition that the French flag be allowed to fly until the next day. Stoddard consented, and the Creoles formed a guard of honor who watched the flag through the night and until its final descent. March 10, 1804, Stoddard, as the representative of both countries, caused the French flag to be lowered and that of the United States to be raised in its stead.

In the government of Upper Louisiana Spain was confronted by a serious problem. It was difficult in the beginning because of the unsympathetic feeling of the French inhabitants; it grew more difficult when the pioneer American population, alien in feelings, traditions, religion, and habits of thought pressed into the country. The population at the time of the transfer was estimated at about nine thousand whites, three-fifths of whom were Americans, and about thirteen hundred negro slaves. The French lived in the villages, and the farmers among them cultivated their lots in the common fields, just as their forefathers had done in France. The Americans with few exceptions were scattered throughout the country on isolated farms in the neighborhood of the villages. They were generally of the frontier type, disdainful of restraint, but such was their respect for, or fear of, the Spanish government that with few exceptions they became law-abiding citizens.

The Spanish government had its weaknesses, as I have pointed out; but it was dignified, it was just, and it was not oppressive. Its subjects, however, were French and they remained French; the few Spanish who came to the country were absorbed by the French. When the flag of Spain disappeared from Upper Louisiana, it was as though the Spanish domination had never been. No heritage was left of principles, of ideas, or of customs.

Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process
Neutralizing Agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date:



PRESERVATION TECHNOLOGIES, INC.
111 Thomson Park Drive
Cochran Township, PA 16055

DOERS BROS.
LIBRARY BINDING

ST. AUGUSTINE

FLA.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 005 501 972 1